

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 14018

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FROM ENVOY'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, VT, CZ
SUBJECT: VATICAN-CZECHOSLOVAKIAN RELATIONS

1. AMBASSADOR TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THOMAS R. BYRNE, ACCOMPANIED BY SARROS, MADE COURTESY CALL ON VATICAN FOREIGN MINISTER CASAROLI, AUGUST 26, TO OBTAIN HIS VIEWS ON CURRENT STATUS OF VATICAN-CZECHOSLOVAKIAN RELATIONS AND HIS EVALUATION OF CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND IN EASTERN EUROPE IN GENERAL.

2. CURRENT STATUS OF VATICAN-GOC NEGOTIATIONS: CASAROLI SAID THAT DURING THE LAST THREE MONTHS THERE HAVE OCCURRED PRELIMINARY TALKS WHICH HAVE SET THE STAGE FOR FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS TO BE RESUMED IN SEPTEMBER AT THE VATICAN. HE IS HOPEFUL BUT NOT OPTIMISTIC, REGARDING THE RESULTS OF THE FORTHCOMING NEGOTIATIONS, BELIEVING THAT THE CZECHS ARE STILL THE MOST DIFFICULT NEGOTIATORS ENCOUNTERED BY THE VATICAN IN EASTERN EUROPE. CASAROLI EXPLAINED THAT THIS WAS DUE TO THE REGIME'S STRONGLY IDEOLOGICAL COMMITMENT TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ROME 14018 291801Z

CHURCH AND THEIR BELIEF THAT THIS IS POSSIBLE. WHILE RECENT INFORMAL CONTACTS HAVE INDICATED A DIMINUTION IN THIS COMMITMENT AND A CONCOMITANT REALIZATION THAT THE CHURCH CANNOT BE DESTROYED, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PARTY ARE SPLIT ON THE ISSUE OF IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS WITH CHURCH AND VATICAN. IN THIS CONNECTION, HUSAK AND CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE PERCEIVED BY THE VATICAN AS MORE DISPOSED TO IMPROVING

CHURCH-STATE AND GOC-VATICAN RELATIONS, BUT THAT IN CONTRAST, CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE PARTY ARE INCLINED TO INTERPRET EVERY CONCESSION, EVEN MINOR ONES, TO THE CHURCH, AS A VICTORY FOR THE CHURCH AND, THEREFORE, A DEFEAT OF THE PARTY'S PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE OF DESTROYING THE CHURCH. HE NOTED AS SUPPORTING EVIDENCE THAT IN MOST RECENT GOC-VATICAN TALKS A NEW YOUNGER MEMBER OF THE GOC NEGOTIATING COMMISSION MADE THE ENTIRE GROUP TO BE OVERLY CAUTIOUS IN DISCUSSING CHURCH-STATE ISSUES. (CASAROLI ALSO EVINced CONSIDERABLE PREOCCUPATIONS AS TO WHETHER FOREIGN MINISTER CHNOUPEK COULD DELIVER ON HIS PROMISES). CASAROLI SAID THAT POPE PAUL HAS BEEN EXASPERATED WITH GOC NEGOTIATING BEHAVIOR AND ON MANY OCCASIONS HAS BEEN INCLINED TO VETO FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS BUT THAT SO FAR HIS (CASAROLI'S) COUNSEL OF PRUDENCE AND PERSEVERENCE HAS WON OUT.

3. PACEM IN TERRIS PRIESTS. IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR BYRNE'S QUERY FOR AN EVALUATION OF THE CZECHOSLOVAKIAN "PEACE PRIESTS" MOVEMENT, CASAROLI QUOTED CARDINAL TOMASEK'S STATEMENT THAT THE MAJORITY OF THEM, DESPITE THEIR COOPERATION AND LOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT, ARE "GOOD PRIEST." HE ELABORATED THAT PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE CONFIRMED THIS. ON AN OCCASION WHEN VATICAN PUT SEVERAL OF THEM TO A TEST--ON THE QUESTION OF APPOINTING AS A BISHOP THE GOVERNMENT'S PREFERRED CANDIDATE--IN PRIVATE THEY ALL VETOED APPOINTMENT AS INIMICAL TO CHURCH'S INTERESTS. THIS IS A QUESTION, HE SAID THAT IS VERY PERTINENT AND POSES SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ROME 14018 291801Z

IN EVALUATING THE CREDENTIAL OF CANDIDATES FOR HIGH POSITIONS IN CHURCH AND IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT THE VATICAN HAS ALWAYS INSISTED THAT THE GOC PERMIT VATICAN OFFICIALS TO HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO INTERVIEW CANDIDATES CONFIDENTIALLY. (NOTE: SUCH PERMISSION HAS BEEN RESISTED BY THE GOC UNTIL JULY, 1977, WHEN FATHER BUKOVSKY OF THE VATICAN FOREIGN MINISTRY WAS PERMITTED TO TRAVEL FREELY THROUGHOUT CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND CONFIDENTIALLY INTERVIEW SOME 80 CANDIDATES).

4. HUMAN RIGHTS. HE THOUGHT THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS A GREAT ROLE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT A MORAL TONE BE ADDED TO A GREAT POWER'S FOREIGN POLICY. HE THEREFORE, LAUDED THE ADMINISTRATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY SAYING THAT IT, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT, HAS BROUGHT ON A KIND OF REVOLUTION IN WORLD POLITICS IN THAT RUSSIA, WHICH UP TO NOW WAS ACTING AS JUDGE ON THE WORLD SCENE, HAD BEEN COMPELLED TO ACT AS THE ACCUSED. HE ADDED, THAT ALTHOUGH THE U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY WAS A "GREAT POLICY", A TOUCH OF REALISM IS NECESSARY IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION SO THAT SOME COUNTRIES WILL NOT COMPLETELY RETRACT. HE STATED IN THIS CONNECTION THAT ALTHOUGH

THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT WAS A VERY GOOD DOCUMENT, IT WOULD BE NAIVE
TO BELIEVE THAT THE COMMUNIST REGIMES COULD FULFILL ALL ITS
HUMAN RIGHTS PROVISIONS BECAUSE THAT WOULD MEAN THE END OF
THE REGIMES THEMSELVES. THE WESTERN OBJECTIVE SHOULD, HOWEVER,
BE TO PERSIST IN ORDER TO OBTAIN EVER INCREASING CONCESSIONS
ON ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS. HOLMES

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